

(Mount Clipping in Space Below)

TV Commentator Rips Into Dallas

Television commentator Eric Sevareid, commenting on Jack Ruby's death, Tuesday night sharply criticized Dallas as being a "metropolis in body but not in spirit."

Sevareid, appearing on the CBS "Walter Cronkite Show," also leveled charges at "Dallas officialdom" for several events since the 1963 assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

Sevareid's statement said:

"A few weeks ago the pathetic, lost, little creature named Jack Ruby was acting strangely in his Dallas jail cell. He's hamming it up, said the jailers. He began to breathe heavily. A bad cold said the jail doctors.

"Then he seemed really sick. Pneumonia said the doctor. Today Ruby died of cancer. With rigorous, unbroken consistency Dallas officialdom fumbled to the end.

"Consider the record, moving backwards in time:

"The other day Ruby's brother smuggled a tape recorder into his hospital room right under the eyes of the policeman on constant duty. A few months ago, a higher court threw out the murder with malice aforethought verdict on Ruby because his Dallas trial had been conducted so sloppily under such prejudicial conditions.

"During that trial the courthouse was thrown into panic when several prisoners in the cells upstairs broke out, one of them using a pistol-like object made of soap. On the day Ruby killed Oswald, he was allowed to mix freely with the police and reporters in the City Hall basement. What was familiar was OK. The police had tipped off reporters and cameramen as to the time and place of moving Oswald to jail.

"There's a first name camaraderie

among Dallas authorities and ~~alike~~ hang about them. Jack Ruby, night joint proprietor, a quarrelsome, emotionally unstable person, carried a pistol by right of a police permit to carry it.

"Go back further. A few minutes after President Kennedy was killed, the policeman who ran into the book depository building saw Lee Harvey Oswald in the refectory. He's OK, he works here, said the man in charge.

"The man who was police chief when Oswald was killed has continued in office for a long time. So did the man who was sheriff when the absurd jail break occurred.

"So did the judge who presided over the tragi-comic trial . . . All are nice men; all are well liked in Dallas. And this it seemed to me, at the time, is the heart of the trouble. Dallas is at the adolescent, awkward age. It grew up too quickly. It is a metropolis in body but not yet

in spirit. Government remains a personal thing as in a small time courthouse. With size and sophistication go formality, impersonality, severe rules and standards. But Dallas officialdom hates to part with its breezy, informal family, nick-naming spirit.

"At the awkward age, very awkward things happen . . ."

Cronkite replied: "Perhaps the same can be said, Eric, of many American communities. Only the magnitude of the tragedies set Dallas apart.

Informed of Sevareid's statements, Dallas County Sheriff Bill Decker said he had no comment.

Calling Sevareid a "great writer," he said, "I can't see any reason to get in an argument with him.

"He can't gain anything with that kind of thing," the sheriff continued. "I'm satisfied with my office operations and apparently the people are."

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Gandy

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